

Kitab At-Tawwabeen(Translated)

Introduction to the Investigation:

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, seek His help, seek His forgiveness, and seek refuge in Him from the evils of ourselves and from the consequences of our deeds. Whoever Allah guides, there is no one who can misguide him, and whoever He leads astray, there is no guide for him. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, without any partner. He legislated repentance for His servants, extending His hand during the night for the one who seeks repentance from the sins committed during the day, and extending His hand during the day for the one who seeks repentance from the sins committed during the night. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger, the leader of those who seek forgiveness and the Imam of those who repent. Peace and blessings be upon him.

(1)Now then: This is the book of the repentant, authored by the Imam, the jurist, the ascetic, Muwaffaq al-Din Abu Muhammad Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi al-Hanbali. We present it to people at a time when we are most in need of repentance from our sins, by returning and turning to Allah the Exalter of faults and the Forgiver of sins.

In this book, the author—may Allah have mercy on him—presents the stories of those who repented and turned back to Allah from various ancient and modern times, from the era of Adam (peace be upon him) to the early seventh century Hijri in which the author lived.

The author presents these stories in an engaging manner, narrating them in an attractive style and explaining them in clear, familiar sentences, from which the reader gains lessons and benefits easily and eagerly.

Undoubtedly, reading it with enthusiasm and eagerness awakens in a person the piety that motivates him to draw closer to Allah the Exalted, by shedding off vices and distancing himself from their causes, and by embracing virtues and seeking their means and facilitations.

However, the author—may Allah have mercy on him—deliberately omitted (because it is beyond the scope of this book) discussing repentance, its conditions, what is necessary for it, and therefore, I will supplement in this introduction what he overlooked, may Allah benefit us with it and grant us its advantages. Therefore, I say:

- (1) From the words of Professor Al-Fasil Abd al-Qadir al-Arna'ut in his introduction to the book.

Accountability of the Soul:

Repentance is not attained except after holding oneself accountable, because when a person holds themselves accountable, they recognize their due obligations, withdraw from them, and return to their Lord. This is the essence of repentance, thus prioritizing self-accountability is essential.

Delaying self-accountability is also valid, as it cannot occur without rectifying repentance. Investigation reveals that repentance involves two stages of accountability: pre-repentance accountability necessitates its obligation, and post-repentance accountability ensures its preservation.

Repentance is encapsulated within these dual accountabilities, as indicated by Allah's words: "O you who have believed, fear Allah and let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow..." (1). This commands reflection on one's deeds, contemplating their rectification for acceptance by Allah.

This contemplation enhances readiness for Judgment Day, safeguarding against divine retribution while earning divine favor.

Umar ibn Al-Khattab stated, "Hold yourselves accountable before you are held accountable; weigh your deeds before they are weighed; beautify yourself for the great display, on that Day nothing will remain hidden." (2)

The status of repentance:

Once a person achieves the noble status of self-accountability, it is higher than mere repentance because they understand what they owe and have left behind.

Repentance is both the start and end for a believer, remaining indispensable throughout life. Even as one progresses to other stages, repentance must remain an essential companion.

Indeed, repentance is fundamental for success, as emphasized by Allah's call: "And repent to Allah, all of you, O believers, that you may succeed." (3) This directive, addressed to the believers in Medina, underscores the imperative for repentance following faith, patience, migration, and struggle.

Success is inextricably linked to repentance.

References:

1. Surah Al-Hashr, Verse 18.
2. Surah Al-Haaqqa, Verse 18.
3. Surah An-Nur, Verse 31.

These verses underscore the significance of repentance in achieving spiritual growth and divine approval.

The Cause and Its Effect, and the Use of "Perhaps" - Sensing Hope in Repentance:

"If you repent, you will be on hope. And Allah said: 'And whoever does not repent - then it is they who are the wrongdoers.'" (1) Thus, Allah divided His servants into the repentant (al-Ta'ib) and the successful (al-Falah). No one hopes for success except those who repent; may Allah make us among them.

And He did not categorize a third group entirely. He placed the label "wrongdoers" upon those who do not repent, for none is more unjust than one who remains ignorant of his Lord, His rights, the flaws of his own soul, and the defects in his deeds.

The Opening of Repentance:

Since repentance is the return of the servant to Allah, abandoning the paths of those who incur His wrath and those who go astray, this can only be achieved through Allah's guidance to the straight path. His guidance to it can only be achieved through His assistance and His unity. Surat al-Fatihah has organized it most effectively, and it has contained it most comprehensively. Whoever gives al-Fatihah its due right - in knowledge, testimony, condition, and understanding - knows that he cannot rightly recite it while in a state of slavery except through sincere repentance.

For complete guidance to the straight path does not coincide with ignorance of sins or persistence in them. The former negates knowledge of guidance, while the latter negates intention and will. Therefore, repentance is not valid without first acknowledging the sin, confessing it, and seeking to avoid its evil consequences, both at the outset and in the end. (2)

Either Clinging to Allah or Sins:

One of the meanings of repentance is for the servant to reflect upon his detachment from clinging to Allah at the time of committing sin. It is that Allah, Exalted is He, lifted His protection from him. And he should reflect upon his joy upon committing that sin and his satisfaction in not remedying it, persisting in it, despite being certain of Allah's watchful gaze upon him.

If the servant clings to Allah after deviating from the path of obedience, Allah said: "And whoever clings to Allah - he has been guided to a straight path." (3) If he completes his attachment to Allah, He will never forsake him. Allah said: "So cling to Allah; He is your protector, and what an excellent protector and what an excellent helper." (4) Meaning, when you cling to Him, He will be your ally and supporter against yourselves and against Satan, the two adversaries that never leave the servant.

Footnotes: (1) Surah Al-Hujurat, Ayah 11 (2) Tuhfat al-Murid 185/1, 186/1-187 (3) Surah Al-Imran, Ayah 101 (4) Surah Al-Hajj, Ayah 78

Their enmity is more harmful than the enmity of the external enemy, so victory over this enemy is more important, and the servant is more in need of it.

The perfection of victory over the enemy is according to the perfection of holding fast to Allah, and the deficiency of this holding fast leads to being torn from the protection of Allah, which is the reality of abandonment, for Allah the Almighty did not leave you alone with the sin except after He abandoned you, and left you alone with yourself, and if He had protected you and granted you success, the sin would not have found a way to you.

Thus, repentance returns to your holding fast to Allah the Almighty, and His protection of you (1).

Heedlessness when committing the sin

Heedlessness is so intense for the one who commits the sin that he rejoices when he achieves his forbidden desire, and this joy in the sin is evidence of the intensity of the desire for it, and ignorance of the degree of the one he disobeyed, and ignorance of the evil consequences and the greatness of its danger, so his joy in it covered all of that for him, and his joy in it is more harmful to him than committing it.

The believer never gets pleasure from a sin, nor does he complete his joy with it. Rather, he does not engage in it except with sadness mixed with his heart, but the intoxication of desire prevents him from feeling it. When his heart is free of this sadness, and his joy and happiness are intense, then let him question his faith, and let him weep over the death of his heart, because if he were alive, committing the sin would have saddened him, angered him, and made it difficult for him, and the heart does not feel that, so where it does not feel it, then a wound to a dead person does not hurt. This point in the sin is that few are guided to it or pay attention to it, and it is a very frightening matter, leading to destruction if it is not remedied by three things: fear of meeting it before repentance. Regret for what he missed from Allah by disobeying His command. And rolling up the sleeves to make up for it. Conditions of Repentance: The conditions of repentance are three: regret, cessation, and determination. The reality of repentance is:

- (1) See Tahdhib Madarij as-Salikeen 1/187.
- (2) Tahdhib Madarij as-Salikeen 1/188.

Regretting what he did in the past.

And quitting it immediately.

And resolving not to do it again in the future.

The three come together at the time when repentance occurs, for at that time he regrets and quits, and resolves.

At that time he returns to the servitude for which he was created, and this return is the reality of repentance. And these conditions are if the sin and disobedience are between the servant and Allah Almighty, but if it is related to the right of a human being, then its conditions are four, these three,

And the fourth: that he be absolved of the right of its owner, if it is money or something similar, he returns it to him, and if it is a punishment for slander or something similar, he enables him to have it or asks for his pardon, and if it is backbiting, he asks his forgiveness for it (1).

Signs of accepted repentance:

And for the correct accepted repentance there are signs:

Among them: that the servant is better after repentance than he was before it. Fear continues to accompany him, he does not feel safe from Allah's deception for the blink of an eye, so his fear continues until he hears the words of the Messenger of Death, who is taking his soul: "Do not fear and do not grieve, and receive good tidings of Paradise which you were promised." Then the fear disappears. Among them: his heart is torn apart, and it is torn apart with regret and fear, and this is according to the greatness or smallness of the crime. This is Ibn Uyaynah's interpretation of the Almighty's saying: "Their structure which they have built will not cease to be a source of doubt in their hearts unless their hearts are torn apart." He said: It is torn apart with repentance. There is no doubt that the intense fear of the great punishment causes the heart to be broken and dislocated, and this is its being torn apart, and this is the reality of repentance, because his heart is torn apart with regret for what he has neglected, and fear of the evil consequences of it. So whoever's heart is not torn apart in this world with regret and fear for what he has neglected, it will be torn apart in the Hereafter if the truths are established, and he witnesses the reward of the obedient and the punishment of the disobedient. So the heart must be torn apart either in this world or in the Hereafter.

(1) See Tahdhib Madarij as-Saalikeen 188/1, and Riyad as-Saliheen p. 2.

(2) Surah Fussilat, verse no. 30.

(3) Surah at-Tawbah, verse no. 110.

Among them: A special brokenness that occurs to the heart. Nothing resembles it, and it does not occur to anyone but the sinner. It does not occur through hunger or mere love, but rather it is a matter beyond all of this, breaking the heart in the hands of the Lord, a complete brokenness that has surrounded it from all sides, and has thrown it before its Lord, humbled and submissive. There is nothing more beloved to Allah than this brokenness, submission, humiliation, humility, prostration before Him, and surrender to Him (1). Conclusion: This and similar things are effects of accepted repentance. Whoever does not find that in his heart, let him blame his repentance and return to correcting it. How difficult is true repentance in reality, and how easy it is with the tongue and the claim. The sincere person has not been treated with anything more difficult for him than sincere and honest repentance. There is no power or strength except with Allah (1). This is what God Almighty has enabled me to write about repentance, and I hope that I have covered the matter from many aspects in a way that is sufficient and beneficial. There are many other matters related to repentance that a person must know, but this is not the place to mention them.)

(1) Tahdhib Madarij as-Saalikeen 1/192-193.

(2) Tahdhib Madarij as-Saalikeen 1/193. (3) See Tahdhib Madarij as-Saalikeen 1/175-302.

The Israelite narratives

The author mentioned many stories and stories of the Israelite narratives in his book, especially in the chapter on the repentant angels, prophets, and previous nations. It was necessary for me in this introduction to explain the meaning of the Israelite narratives and the ruling on narrating them. So I say, seeking the help of Allah the Most High:

What is meant by the Israelite narratives is what came from the People of the Book - the Jews and Christians - of stories and news about the past nations, and what happened between their prophets and them.

The term Israelite narratives, although it appears to indicate the Jewish color, means something broader and more comprehensive than that, as it includes both the Jewish color and the Christian color.

The scholars called it the term Israelite narratives because Jesus - peace be upon him - was sent to the Children of Israel, so the Christians are originally from the Children of Israel. The term "Israeliyyat" was used to refer to both Jews and Christians. Some said that it was used to emphasize the Jewish side over the Christian side, because the Jewish side is the one that is famous and has been transmitted a lot, due to the large number of its people, the appearance of their matter, and their intense mixing with Muslims at the beginning of the emergence of Islam until it spread its harbor over many countries of the world, and people entered the religion of God in droves. The Jews rely in their narrations on the Torah - the Old Testament - and what was beside it of the Sunnahs, advice, and explanations that were not taken from Moses - peace be upon him - in writing, but rather they carried them and transmitted them - with many additions and fabrications - in oral form, then they were recorded and known by the name of the Talmud, in addition to what they had of books of literature, stories, history, legislation, and myths. As for the Christians, their narrations depended on the Gospel, and the Gospels that are considered by Christians are called, along with what is added to them from the letters of the apostles: the New Testament. As was the case with In addition to that, the Christians added stories, news and teachings that they claimed to have received from Jesus - peace be upon him. If we consider the Torah and the Gospel, we find that they contain much of what was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, especially what was related to the stories of the Prophets - peace be upon them - with a great difference in generality and detail. When the Qur'an presents a story from the stories of the Prophets, for example, it takes a direction that differs from the approach of the Torah and the Gospel. You see it limiting itself to places of admonition, and does not go into detailing the details of the issues, but rather chooses from that what touches the essence of the subject, and what is related to the place of the lesson. From here, the Israelite narratives entered the Muslims, as some of the Companions - may God be pleased with them - used to ask some of the People of the Book - who had converted to Islam, of course, such as Ka'b al-Ahbar, Abdullah bin Salam and others - about the details of some stories and clarifying some matters, and this is absolutely permissible, and it is taken from his saying - -: Narrate from the Children of Israel and there is no harm. (Agreed upon).

However, the Companions - may Allah be pleased with them all - did not ask the People of the Book about everything, nor did they accept everything from them. Rather, they would ask about things that were nothing more than an explanation of the story and a detailed account of

what the Qur'an summarized from it, while they would stop at what was conveyed to them, and they would not judge it as true or false as long as it could be interpreted as both. This was in compliance with the saying of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: "Do not believe the People of the Book, nor disbelieve them, and say, 'We believe in Allah and what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one, and we are Muslims to Him.'" (Narrated by Al-Bukhari). They also did not ask them about anything related to belief or rulings.

Likewise, the Companions did not believe the People of the Book about anything that contradicted Islamic law or conflicted with belief. Rather, they reached the point where if they asked the People of the Book about something and they answered it incorrectly, they would respond to their error and explain to them the correct way to do so.

This is the extent of the Companions' return to the People of the Book and taking from them. As for the followers, they expanded in taking from the People of the Book, so the Israelite narrations in interpretation increased during their era, and this is due to the large number of people of the Book who entered Islam, and the inclination of souls to hear the details of what the Qur'an refers to about the events of the Children of Israel. Then, after the era of the followers, there came those who were very passionate about the Israelite narrations, and they went to extremes in taking from them.

To the point that they did not respond to a statement, nor did they refrain from attaching to the Qur'an everything that was narrated to them, even if it was not accepted by the Sharia, nor could the mind conceive of it. This passion for the Israelite stories and the fondness for transmitting these stories, many of which became a kind of myth, continued until the time came to document the interpretation, and some interpreters filled their books with these Israelite stories, which - that is, this work of introducing these stories into books and interpretations - almost turned people away from looking into them and relying on them. These Israelite stories that the commentators took from the People of the Book and explained the Book of Allah with them had a bad effect on interpretation, because the matter did not stop as it was in the era of the Companions, but rather they went beyond that and rejected everything that was said to them, whether it was true or false. Moreover, this type of interpretation included many fictional, invented stories fabricated about the People of the Book, which made the one who looks at the books of interpretation that are like this not accept anything that came in them because he believes that they are all from one valley. Among these interpretations are the interpretation of al-Tha'labi, the interpretation of al-Kalbi, al-Suddi and many others. Also, the attribution and fabrication of some of these Israelite stories, of which there is hardly any truth, to some of the believers from the People of the Book, made some people look at them with an eye of accusation and suspicion. The value of what is narrated from the Israelite narrations:

After examining the Israelite narrations, the authenticity of their chain of transmission and their attribution to their narrator from the People of the Book, their news is divided into three sections:

The first: What is known to be authentic, by being transmitted from the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him with an authentic transmission, such as identifying the companion of Moses - peace be upon him - as Al-Khidr, as this name came explicitly on the tongue of the Messenger of Allah - may Allah bless him and grant him peace - as in Al-Bukhari. Or it had a witness from the Shariah supporting it, and this section is authentic and acceptable.

The second: What is known to be false, by contradicting what we know from our Shariah from what came in the Book of Allah, the Most High, or was reported from the Messenger of Allah - may Allah bless him and grant him peace -

The third: What is not mentioned, neither of this type nor of that type, so we do not believe in it nor disbelieve it, and it is permissible to narrate it for the above, and most of that is of no benefit that returns to a religious matter,

(1) The Book of Interpretation, Interpretation of Surat Al-Kahf, Chapter (4), Hadith No. (4727) 423/8.

To the point that they did not respond to a statement, nor did they refrain from attaching to the Qur'an everything that was narrated to them, even if it was not accepted by the Sharia, nor could the mind conceive of it. This passion for the Israelite stories and the fondness for transmitting these stories, many of which became a kind of myth, continued until the time came to document the interpretation, and some interpreters filled their books with these Israelite stories, which - that is, this work of introducing these stories into books and interpretations - almost turned people away from looking into them and relying on them. These Israelite stories that the commentators took from the People of the Book and explained the Book of Allah with them had a bad effect on interpretation, because the matter did not stop as it was in the era of the Companions, but rather they went beyond that and rejected everything that was said to them, whether it was true or false. Moreover, this type of interpretation included many fictional, invented stories fabricated about the People of the Book, which made the one who looks at the books of interpretation that are like this not accept anything that came in them because he believes that they are all from one valley. Among these interpretations are the interpretation of al-Tha'labi, the interpretation of al-Kalbi, al-Suddi and many others. Also, the attribution and fabrication of some of these Israelite stories, of which there is hardly any truth, to some of the believers from the People of the Book, made some people look at them with an eye of accusation and suspicion. The value of what is narrated from the Israelite narrations:

After examining the Israelite narrations, the authenticity of their chain of transmission and their attribution to their narrator from the People of the Book, their news is divided into three sections:

The first: What is known to be authentic, by being transmitted from the Prophet - - - with an authentic transmission, such as identifying the companion of Moses - peace be upon him - as Al-Khidr, as this name came explicitly on the tongue of the Messenger of Allah - may Allah bless him and grant him peace - as in Al-Bukhari. Or it had a witness from the Shariah supporting it, and this section is authentic and acceptable.

The second: What is known to be false, by contradicting what we know from our Shariah from what came in the Book of Allah, the Most High, or was reported from the Messenger of Allah - may Allah bless him and grant him peace -

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(1) The Book of Interpretation, Interpretation of Surat Al-Kahf, Chapter (4), Hadith No. (4727) 423/8.

This is why scholars of the People of the Book differ greatly on this, and there is disagreement from commentators because of this, as they mention in such a case the names of the People of the Cave, the color of their dog, and other things.

Conclusion:

The summary of what was mentioned above: It is permissible to narrate Isra'iliyyat, after its chain of transmission is sound and its attribution to its narrator from the People of the Book - because the heretics have fabricated many, many things and attributed them to the People of the Book - then the narration is presented to the Shari'ah. If there is something in the Shari'ah that agrees with it, its truthfulness is known, and if there is something in the Shari'ah that contradicts it, its falsehood is known, and if there is nothing in it that agrees with it or negates it, it is stopped and it is not ruled as true or false, and it is permissible to narrate it despite that. And Allah knows best.

He mentioned some of those who were famous for narrating Isra'iliyyat: Among them is the great companion Abu Yusuf Abdullah bin Salam bin Al-Harith, who converted to Islam when the Prophet - may Allah bless him and grant him peace - arrived in Medina, and witnessed with Omar - may Allah be pleased with him - the conquest of Jerusalem and Jabia, and stood by Othman during the tribulation. May Allah be pleased with him, he had vast knowledge, and this is not surprising, as he combined the knowledge of the Torah and the knowledge of the Qur'an. Abu Ishaq Ka'b bin Mat' al-Himyari, known as Ka'b al-Ahbar, was originally from the Jews of Yemen. It is said that he lived during the pre-Islamic era and converted to Islam during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, and it is said during the caliphate of Omar. After his conversion to Islam, he moved to Medina and conquered the Romans during the caliphate of Omar, then moved to the Levant during the caliphate of Othman and lived there until he died in Homs in the year 32 AH. According to the most reliable opinion, he was one hundred and forty years old. He narrated from the Messenger of Allah - in a mursal form, and from Omar, Suhaib, and Aisha; and Mu'awiyah, Abu Hurairah, Ibn Abbas, Ata' bin Abi Rabah, and many others narrated from him. Ka'b ibn Mat'i had a great deal of knowledge, and for this reason he was called: Ka'b al-Habr, and Ka'b al-Ahbar. It has been reported from him in the interpretation and other things that indicate his vast knowledge of the Jewish religion and Islam. Ibn Sa'd said: Abu al-Darda' mentioned Ka'b and said: Ibn al-Himyari has a lot of knowledge. Wabib ibn Munabbih ibn Sayj ibn Dhaknaz, Abu Abdullah al-Yamani al-San'ani, one of the best scholars of the Tabi'un. He was born in the year 34 AH, during the caliphate of Uthman, and died in the year 110 AH, and other things have been said. He narrated from Abu Hurairah, Abu Sa'id al-Hadri, Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-'As, Jabir, Anas, and others. His two sons Abdullah and Abdul Rahman, Umar ibn Dinar, and many others narrated from him.

May Allah have mercy on him, he was widely knowledgeable and well-read in ancient books, and was well-versed in many stories and tales related to the first and beginning of the world. He used to say: They say Abdullah bin Salam is the most knowledgeable person of his time, and Kaab is the most knowledgeable person of his time. Have you seen someone who combined their knowledge? He means himself.

Rumi - Abdul Malik bin Abdul Aziz bin Jurayj, Abu Khalid or Abu Al-Walid, originally a Christian, was one of the scholars of Mecca and their narrators, and he was one of the first to compile books in the Hijaz, and he is the pole of the Israelite narrations in the era of the followers.

He narrated from his father, Ata bin Abi Rabah, Zaid bin Aslam, Al-Zuhri and others. His sons Abdul Aziz, Muhammad, Al-Awza'i, Al-Layth bin Saad, Yahya bin Saeed Al-Ansari, Hammad bin Zaid and many others narrated from him. Ibn Saad said: He was born in the year 80 AH, and as for his death, there is disagreement about it.

Some of them said the year 150 AH, and some of them said the year 159 AH, and other things were said.

Quoted, with great abbreviation and modification, from the book "Interpretation and Interpreters" by Dr. Muhammad Hussein Al-Dhahabi, pp. 165-201. See also Ibn Kathir's Interpretation 4/1, Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah 121/2-123, and Fath Al-Bari 498/6-499...